Ikaros

[Being a teacher, this is one of my favorite myths...It underscores the folly of youth...which has a special meaning for me!]

Daedalus was a highly respected and talented Athenian artisan descendent from the royal family of Cecrops, the mythical first king of Athens. He was known for his skill as an architect, sculpture, and inventor, and he produced many famous works. Despite his self-confidence, Daedalus once committed a crime of envy against Talus, his nephew and apprentice. Talus, who seemed destined to become as great an artisan as his uncle Daedalus, was inspired one day to invent the saw after having seen the way a snake used its jaws. Daedalus, momentarily stricken with jealousy, threw Talus off of the Acropolis. For this crime, Daedalus was exiled to Crete and placed in the service of King Minos, where he eventually had a son, Icarus, with the beautiful Naucrate, a mistress-slave of the King.
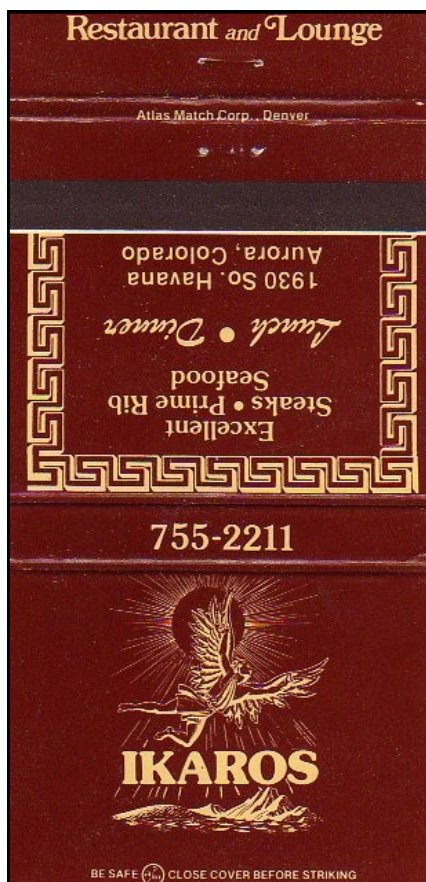
Minos called on Daedalus to build the famous Labyrinth in order to imprison the dreaded Minotaur. The Minotaur was a monster with the head of a bull and the body of a man. He was the son of Pasiphae, the wife of Minos, and a bull that Poseidon had sent to Minos as a gift. Minos was shamed by the birth of this horrible creature and resolved to imprison the Minotaur in the Labyrinth where it fed on humans, which were taken as "tribute" by Minos and sacrificed to the Minotaur in memory of his fallen son Androgenos.

Theseus, the heroic King of Athens, volunteered himself to be sent to the Minotaur in the hopes of killing the beast and ending the "human tribute" that his city was forced to pay Minos. When Theseus arrived to Crete, Ariadne, Minos's daughter, fell in love with him and wished to help him survive the Minotaur. Daedalus revealed the mystery of the Labyrinth to Ariadne who in turn advised Theseus, thus enabling him to slay the Minotaur and escape from the Labyrinth. When Minos found out what Daedalus had done he was so enraged that he imprisoned Daedalus & Icarus in the Labyrinth themselves.

Daedalus conceived to escape from the Labyrinth with Icarus from Crete by constructing wings and then flying to safety. He built the wings from feathers and wax, and before the two set off he warned Icarus not to fly too low lest his wings touch the waves and get wet, and not too high lest the sun melt the wax. But the young Icarus, overwhelmed by the thrill of flying, did not heed his father's warning, and flew too close to the sun whereupon the wax in his wings melted and he fell into the sea. Daedalus escaped to Sicily and Icarus' body was carried ashore by the current to an island then without a name. Later,

Heracles came across the body and named the island and the sea around it after the fallen Icarus.

[http://www.island-ikaria.com/culture/myth.asp]

Charles-Paul Landon, 1790-1826; Dédale et Icare. Photo ©Maicar Förlag-GML